



Ad Standards Community Panel
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AdStandards.com.au

Advertising Standards Bureau Limited
ACN 084 452 666

Case Report

1	Case Number	0162/18
2	Advertiser	Country Road
3	Product	Clothing
4	Type of Advertisement / media	Promo Material
5	Date of Determination	11/04/2018
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

- 2.2 - Objectification Degrading - women
- 2.2 - Objectification Exploitative - women

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

This print advertisement is a catalogue, and features two images which are the subject of the complaint. 1. the 'Jet Set' image featuring a male and female model in a helicopter ("Jet Set Image"); and 2. the 'Time to Play- Boardroom to Bar' image featuring three male models and a female model on a rooftop bar ("Time to Play Image")

THE COMPLAINT

A sample of comments which the complainant/s made regarding this advertisement included the following:

- 1. It glamorises players i.e. People who abuse the friendship of others for their own gains, by suggesting that if you wear this suit, you're a player, who gets the girl and the helicopter. The position of the male model vis a vis the female implies ownership of the woman or in other words that women, like helicopters are objects to possess.*
- 2. The page with the caption from boardroom to bar depicts a boardroom where the woman is being stared at by a man in a manner that is inappropriate for work. It*



suggests that it is okay to stare at women in that manner in the workplace.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

Comments which the advertiser made in response to the complainant/s regarding this advertisement include the following:

*RESPONSE TO ADVERTISING STANDARDS COMPLAINT - COUNTRY ROAD GROUP PTY LTD ("CRG")
COMPLAINT REFERENCE NUMBER 0162/18*

We refer to the complaint received by CRG in relation to two print advertisements for the Politix 'The Player' campaign, namely:

- 1. the 'Jet Set' image featuring a male and female model in a helicopter ("Jet Set Image"); and*
- 2. the 'Time to Play- Boardroom to Bar' image featuring three male models and a female model on a rooftop bar ("Time to Play Image").*

The Jet Set Image and the Time to Play Image are collectively referred to as the "Advertisements".

By way of background, the Advertisements were used in our Politix spring catalogue, included as an insert to the Australian Financial Review. This catalogue launched the new season of Politix's creatively designed, distinctive and premium suit range designed for the modern, fashion conscious man. The theme of this campaign is established by an opening statement made by highly respected Australian sportsperson and Politix brand ambassador, Harry Kewell. This statement is prominently featured on page 2 of the catalogue, and a brief excerpt is noted here for your reference:

*"Work hard, play hard. That's always been my motto as a soccer player and now as a coach...Like all game plans – you've got to put in and look your best day in, day out."
Harry Kewell*

This statement embodies the intent and theme of the Advertisements, and was the foundation behind the use of the term 'The Player' for this catalogue. Each of the images in the catalogue show models embracing the 'work hard, play hard' lifestyle, by being pictured in both professional and social settings, consistently well dressed in fashionable, luxurious apparel.

The Jet Set Image

This image features a male and female model sitting inside a helicopter. The female model holds a champagne glass in her hand. The male model has casually placed his



hand on her leg. Both models are dressed appropriately. There is no excessive display of skin or overly sexual or provocative behaviour.

The complaint alleges that this image “glamorises players i.e people who abuse the friendships of others for their own gain”. It is also alleged that the pose of the models implies the male has “ownership of the woman”.

This image was designed to capture a well dressed romantic couple, preparing to depart for a social event. The female looks comfortable and glamorous whilst admiring the New York skyline, and the male has casually placed his hand on her leg. CRG rejects the assertion that this gesture implies the male’s “abuse” or “ownership” of the female in any way but rather it is a common and typical gesture of affection in a romantic relationship between consenting adults.

The Time to Play Image

This image features three males and a female on a rooftop bar. Two of the males are looking away, whilst the third male is looking at the female. The female is looking towards the camera, whilst holding a martini glass.

The complaint alleges that this image shows a woman being stared at by a man “in a manner that is inappropriate for work”. It also alleges that this image suggests it is “okay to stare at women in that manner in the workplace”.

This image was captured on a rooftop bar in New York, designed to show a group of friends catching up for after-work drinks. The social theme of this image is further emphasised by the apparel of the male models, being casual and playful through the use of floral shirts and printed blazers. The female model wears a conservative pant suit, and is not showing any excessive skin or posing in a sexualised manner. This image is consistent with the overall theme of the catalogue. While the male is looking at the female, it is not intended to be in an inappropriate manner. As noted above, the models are not pictured in a workplace setting.

CRG owns a number of iconic Australian brands (including Country Road, Witchery, Trenery, Mimco and Politix) with a predominantly female workforce, and is committed to being respectful of women, both within the business and to its customer base. CRG does not tolerate inappropriate behaviour towards women in the workplace, and consider that the complainant has misconstrued the intent behind this image.

AANA Code of Ethics

CRG takes great care in ensuring compliance with the AANA Code of Ethics (Code) and consumer laws in respect of advertising. In relation to Section 2 of the Code, please see our comments on each part.



Part 2.1 (Discrimination or Vilification): The Advertisements feature both males and females. In no way do the Advertisements discriminate or vilify any person or section of the community.

Part 2.2 (Exploitative and Degrading): The Advertisements do not employ sexual appeal in an exploitative or degrading manner. There are no lewd, offensive or suggestive poses. The clothing worn by the female models is appropriately covered, and does not expose excessive skin. The complainant's assertion that the Advertisements suggest women are "objects to possess" is unfounded. We also consider the manner in which the Advertisements were filmed to be creative, positive and uplifting – not exploitative or degrading.

Part 2.3 (Violence): The Advertisements do not contain any violence.

Part 2.4 (Sex, Sexuality and Nudity): The Advertisements contain no references to sex nor include nudity.

Part 2.5 (Language): There are no words spoken in the Advertisement.

Part 2.6 (Health and Safety): There are no health or safety issues arising from the Advertisement.

The imagery in the Advertisements is designed to be fun, energetic and playful. We take care to ensure our brand campaigns reflect community standards, and portray women in a dignified and respectful way. CRG disagrees that the Advertisements objectify or exploit females, and finds it disappointing that such an inference was drawn.

We also note for your reference that the Advertisements have featured on the Politix website, social media and in stores. There have been no other complaints or negative feedback received. On the contrary, our customers have responded positively to this vibrant and energetic campaign.

THE DETERMINATION

The Ad Standards Community Panel (the "Panel") considered whether this advertisement breaches Section 2 of the AANA Code of Ethics (the "Code").

The Panel noted the complainant's concern that the advertisement is degrading and exploitative to women.



The Panel viewed the advertisement and noted the advertiser's response.

The Panel noted that the complaint was received after 1 March 2018 and therefore the complaint was considered under the version of Section 2.2 of the Code which states: "Advertising or marketing communications should not employ sexual appeal: (a) where images of Minors, or people who appear to be Minors, are used; or (b) in a manner which is exploitative or degrading of any individual or group of people."

The Panel noted the AANA Practice Note which provides guidance on the meaning of the terms exploitative and degrading:

"Exploitative - means clearly appearing to purposefully debase or abuse a person, or group of persons, for the enjoyment of others, and lacking moral, artistic or other values.

Degrading – lowering in character or quality a person or group of people."

The Panel noted that there are two images in this catalogue advertisement. One featuring a male and female model in a helicopter ("Jet Set Image"), and one featuring three male models and a female model on a rooftop bar ("Time to Play Image").

The Panel noted the complainant's concerns that the advertisement featured imagery that implied women are objects to possess, and that staring at a woman suggestively in the workplace is acceptable.

The Panel considered the advertiser's response relating to 'Jet set image' that the male had casually placed his hand on her leg which is a common and typical gesture of affection in a romantic relationship between consenting adults. The Panel noted that the woman is holding champagne and the man has removed his jacket, both of which indicate that the workday is over and implies their relationship is of a personal rather than professional nature.

The Panel considered the advertiser's response relating to 'Time to play image' that while the male is looking at the female, it is not intended to be in an inappropriate manner and the image is not suggestive of a workplace setting. The Panel considered that the image does indicate that the setting is a rooftop bar and therefore not a workplace. The Panel also noted that there is no indication that the man and woman work together or what their relationship status may be.

In the Panel's view, both the men and the woman are presented in suitable work/leisure clothing and in a social environment and there is no suggestion that the woman is under the possession of a man. The Panel considered that the woman is depicted as being in control of her situation.



The Panel considered that the advertisement did not exploit or degrade women, and did not breach Section 2.2 of the Code.

Finding that the advertisement did not breach the Code on other grounds, the Panel dismissed the complaint.